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U.S. Farm security administration

IMPORTANCE OF SMALL FARMER IN WAR FOOD PRODUCTION

U. S. Department of Agriculture

A large part of the increase in food and fiber production the Nation must have "to win the war and write the peace" will have to come from small farmers.

Large-scale operators already are producing at or near peak capacity. Shortages of machinery and equipment and of skilled seasonal labor are making it increasingly difficult for them to maintain, let alone raise, their levels of production. In some instances, big farmers during the 1942 season fell below their 1941 output because of the difficulties in procuring capable farm help.

On the small farm there is no labor shortage. The farmer and his family do the work. And they can share available implements with other small farmers in the neighborhood.

But the productive labor of vast numbers of small farmers is only partly utilized now. Figures from the 1940 U. S. Census reveal the extent of wasted rural manpower. They show that in 1939 approximately 2,717,000 farmers—56 percent of the bona fide farmers of the Nation—were in the below \$1,000 farm income class. This means the value of all the farm products they sold, traded or used at home was less than \$1,000.

This low farm income holds two serious meanings for those farmers and for the Nation as a whole. One is that the families trying to live on such an income are bound to suffer from a lack of even the necessities of life. The second is that these families are acutely underemployed.

The typical farmer in the less than \$1,000 income group produces about \$600 worth of farm products. In the Midwest this income could come from two milk cows, 20 pigs, 50 hens, and a garden. In the South it could come from eight acres of cotton, two pigs and a garden. Obviously such low production means the available family labor is underemployed.

Every day we lose between 10 million and 15 million man-hours of potential labor on the Nation's small farms. This waste of manpower is equivalent to destroying every day 250 million pounds of pork, or 33 million gallons of milk, or 2½ million dozen eggs.

The low-income and underemployment picture on our farms has not changed much since 1939. Better farm prices have helped the low-income farmer, of course; but only to a limited extent, for he takes just a few hundred dollars' worth of products to market. The only way he can benefit substantially from favorable prices is to expand production, and this he is unable to do without assistance.

Most small farm operators are not getting work in war industries. They are well along in years, untrained and usually far distant from the industrial locations. The young fellow moves away, but the average small farmer, the 45-year-old operator, is still on the farm, and the bulk of low-income farmers are middle-aged, or past.

The place where the small farmer can make his chief contribution to the war effort is on his farm, producing more food than he ever produced before. The full utilization of the labor of small farmers right where they are is essential if the Nation's war food goals are going to be reached.



## FARM SECURITY PROGRAM HELPS SMALL FARMERS BECOME BETTER PRODUCERS

The Government doesn't have to start a program to utilize the manpower of its small farmers for war food production. It already has such a program. For seven years the Farm Security Administration has been helping hundreds of thousands of low-income farmers to improve their resources and productive ability.

Long before Pearl Harbor, Farm Security was emphasizing the need for increased food production among its borrowers. With the United States now in the war, this agency of the U. S. Department of Agriculture is centering its efforts on helping the half million farm families presently active in the standard rehabilitation program to step up their production of Food for Freedom. As many other small farmers will be aided this coming year as funds will permit.

Rehabilitation loans are for farmers who do not have the security to qualify for loans from banks, production credit associations, or other lending institutions. The loans enable them to acquire livestock, machinery, equipment and other things which they need to become better producers. An educational program, with the farm as the classroom, goes along with the loans. County farm and home management supervisors visit the borrowers regularly and help them to improve their skills.

That small farmers, if assisted with loans and training in farm and home management can increase production is shown by what FSA borrowers have accomplished. A survey at the end of 1941 showed that those who had been on the program more than a year had doubled their food production. Their net incomes had increased 80 percent. They had made a gain of 43 percent in their net worth. To date, 177,761 rehabilitation borrowers have repaid their loans in full. Most of the families are meeting their principal and interest payments as they come due.

Last winter, county FSA supervisors asked borrower-families what increases in the products essential to the war effort they thought they could make during 1942. Here are some of the increases the families pledged:

| <u>Commodity</u> | <u>Increase over 1941</u>      |
|------------------|--------------------------------|
| Milk             | 1,150,000,000 lbs.             |
| Pork             | 235,000,000 lbs. (dressed wt.) |
| Eggs             | 77,000,000 dozen               |
| Soybeans         | 7,000,000 bu.                  |
| Tomatoes         | 7,500,000 bu.                  |
| Peanuts          | 2,500,000 bu.                  |
| Beef             | 34,000,000 lbs.                |

Reports from county supervisors indicate that borrower-families are living up to their pledges. Some are "going over the top".

Machinery and purebred sire service co-ops, purchasing and marketing associations group medical and dental care, debt adjustment, war leases, and farm ownership loans are other Farm Security services which are enabling small farmers to become really effective soldiers in the Nation's agricultural production army.

In addition, Farm Security is operating 95 migratory labor camps in specialty crop areas. These camps provide housing, health and sanitary facilities for thousands of migratory farm workers whose labor is now so vitally important to the harvest of war crops.